
THE SARS-CoV-2 PANDEMIC IMPACT ON THIRD-YEAR TOURISM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: On December 31, 2019, China announced a new viral pneumonia. The changes affect all spheres of life, and tourism is among the most affected. On March 13, 2020, a state of emergency was officially declared in Bulgaria in connection with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The summer semester of the 2019/20 academic year begins in a present form and nothing implies a change in the form of teaching. At the end of March, the in-person training was officially replaced by real-time distance learning. In the period March-June, a study was conducted with third-year students majoring in Tourism to acquire a Bachelor's degree by means of internet-based Google-form questionnaire. The aim of this study is to identify how the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has affected the way of life, as well as the motivation of students majoring in Tourism to continue studying this specialty and their professional realization in the tourism business. Both full-time and part-time students took part in the study. The results of the study reveal some of the effects (lifestyle; directly related to Covid-19, attitude to the imposed measures and the feelings caused by the pandemic, time management; and work-related behaviors before and after the pandemic) of the pandemic on students who study for a sector that is almost closed due to the pandemic.

Ключови думи: SARS-CoV-2, university students, tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

On December 31, 2019, China announced a new viral pneumonia. The changes affected all spheres of life, and tourism is among the most affected.

Social distancing, self-isolation, travel restrictions and lockdown rules were implied in various countries. While the whole world is affected economically very badly due to a decrease in industrial production, the travel ban has been imposed by national governments resulting in millions of dollars loss to the airlines and tourism industry (Ali & Alharbi, 2020). However, it was stated that economy and human living experienced negative impact due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic while the environment had an immensely positive impact (Ghosh, Nundy, & Mallick, 2020).

Various actions related to the education were undertaken such as extended deadlines for education credits in Colombia, authorized switch from face-to-face to digital classes in higher education in Brazil, free online educational platform in Chile as well as that educational institutions cannot suspend students due to delay in pension payments in Ecuador (Benítez et al., 2020). The actions in other fields varied too, including coronavirus amnesty for 3,000 prisoners in Peru (Benítez et al., 2020).

Scientists in various countries discussed the issues resulting from the pandemic. Buonsenso et al. (2020) studied the social consequences of SARS-CoV-2 in a low resource setting in Sierra Leone, West Africa while Tisdell (2020) published data on economic, social and political issues raised by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in Australia. Xiong et al. (2020) stated that being unprecedented threat to mental health in high, middle, and low-income countries, the COVID-19 is linked to mental health and except flattening the curve of viral transmission, priority must be given to the prevention of mental disorders (e.g. major depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as suicide). Chang (2020) studied the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic from a gender perspective and concluded that women perform better than men because of the better women's own hormonal protection, better immune systems compared to men as well as because women exhibit more protective proof behavior (e.g., hand-washing) and more closely follow protection guidelines, which greatly reduces the chance of infection.

Nicola et al. (2020) proposed various examples from the hospitality and travel industry resulting from the pandemic. Among them are: placing workers on furlough, hotel industry revenue per available room reduction, occupancy rates decrease, and suspension in operation. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic changed the everyday reality globally and new trends are on the agenda (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020). Same authors stated that as mankind marches towards the society of the fourth industrial revolution of the all-connected world, it all makes more sense for the bridging of gastronomy, technology and society. Remoaldo et al. (2020) stated the need to rethink tourism's traditional models and that creative tourism can encourage and enable the diversification and differentiation of tourism offers in smaller places.

The SARS-CoV-2 outbreak inspired scientists to study the perceptions and behaviors of university students (Nguyen, Pham, & Nguyen, 2020).

The aim of the current study to generate data on the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic impact on perceptions and behaviors of university tourism students during public health crisis considering that tourism is one of the hard-hit economic sectors related to economic, social, ecological, cultural and political aspects of life.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

An internet-based Google-form questionnaire was communicated to Tourism bachelor students. The data collection was anonymous and conducted in April 2020 for the full-time students and in June 2020 – for the part-time students. The response rate was 77%. Consent was obtained from each respondent.

The survey questionnaire was structured in two parts. The first part was related to demographic characteristics (gender and age); full-time or part-time training; and state funded education or paid only from the student. The second part consisted of various items revealing the COVID-19 impact on the university tourism students. Twenty questions used a five-point Likert scale, particularly 1 = totally disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = somewhat agree; 5 = totally agree. Six items were dichotomous (5 = yes; 0 = no). There were sub-groups related to lifestyle (health, food) (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q19); directly related to Covid-19 (Q17, Q20), attitude to the imposed measures and the feelings caused by the pandemic (Q5, Q6, Q11, Q12), time management (Q13, Q15); and work-related behaviors before the pandemic (Q14, Q16, Q18, Q25, Q26) and after the pandemic (Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24). Among the restrictions of the study was that not all of the survey items were obliged to be answered and missing data was reported depending on the item.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

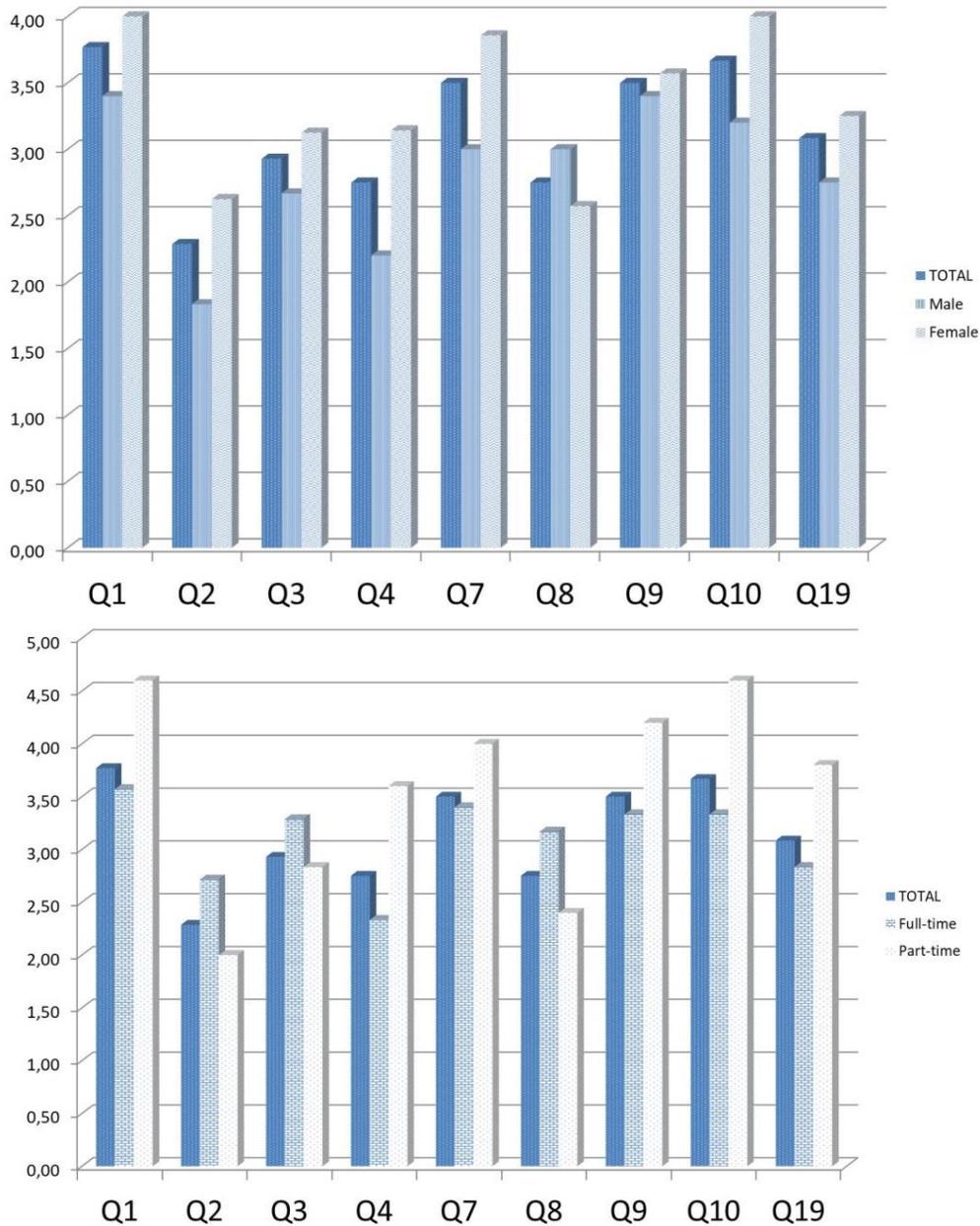
Summary data on the respondents who agreed to participate in the survey and the respective values of the variables gender, age, form of training in terms of time and funding are presented in Table 1. Respondents with state funding (85.17%) exceeded several times the respondents who pay for their education only on their own (14.29%). From the first category, the respondents were divided by gender – female-to-male as two-to-one.

Table 1. Respondents' summary data

Variables	Categories			
Gender	Female (57.14%)		Male (42.86%)	
Age	20 y.o. (7.14%)	21 y.o. (42.86%)	22 y.o. (28.57%)	≥23 y.o. (21.43%)
Type	Full-time (57.14%)		Part-time (42.86)	
Funding	State (85.71%)		Private (14.29%)	

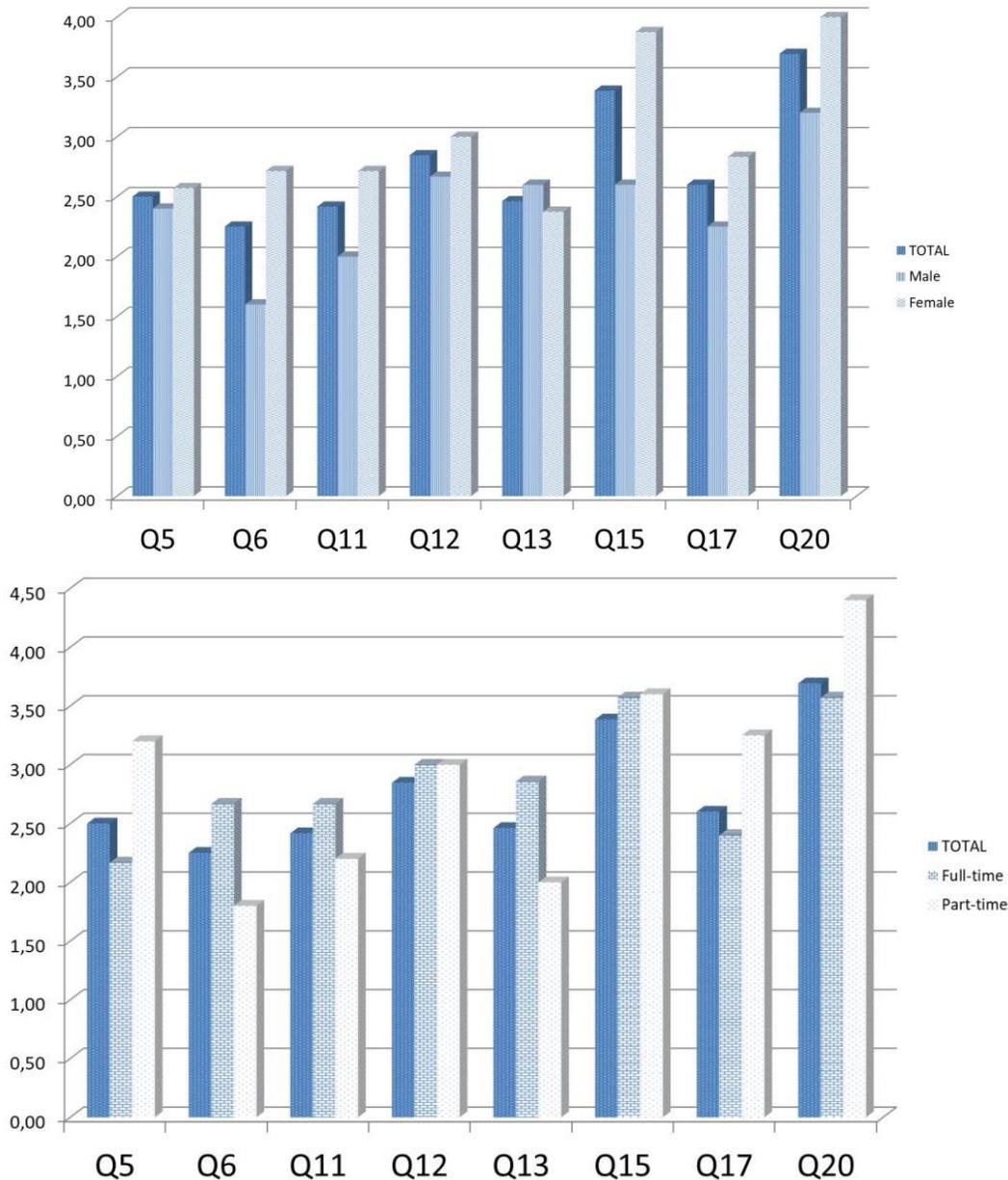
Results for the entire class, as well as their breakdown by gender, are presented in Figure 1. Items Q3, Q4, Q8, and Q19 are relevant to nutrition during the pandemic. The pandemic affects the diet (Q4) of female respondents (3.14) stronger than men (2.20). At the same time, the respondents in part-time education answer that the pandemic (3.60) has a stronger impact than the respondents in full-time education. Women to a greater extent (3.13) try new foods (Q3) but reducing the amount of “harmful” foods (Q8). Definitely, female respondents believe that they are eating healthier during the pandemic (Q19). Full-time respondents are more likely to try new foods (3.29), and this is associated with increased consumption of “harmful” foods.

Figure 1. Lifestyle and food habits



The pandemic has affected the number of times of hand washing (Q1) for personal hygiene, which is emphasized in both genders, and in female respondents it is more pronounced (4.00). Respondents are adamant that the state of emergency has not led to an increase in the amount of sleep (Q2), with male respondents reaching an average of 1.83. In terms of doing new activities (Q7), women are more enterprising (3.86) than men (3.00). For the whole group, personal safety is a priority (Q9) as well as wearing personal protective equipment (Q10) when needed. However, we note that in female respondents this behavior (4.00) is slightly more stable than in male respondents. The questions included focused on the feelings caused by the pandemic (Figure 2) - fear (Q5), sadness, depression (Q6), loneliness (Q11), inspiration (Q12).

Figure 2. Covid-19, time management attitude to the imposed measures and the feelings caused by the pandemic



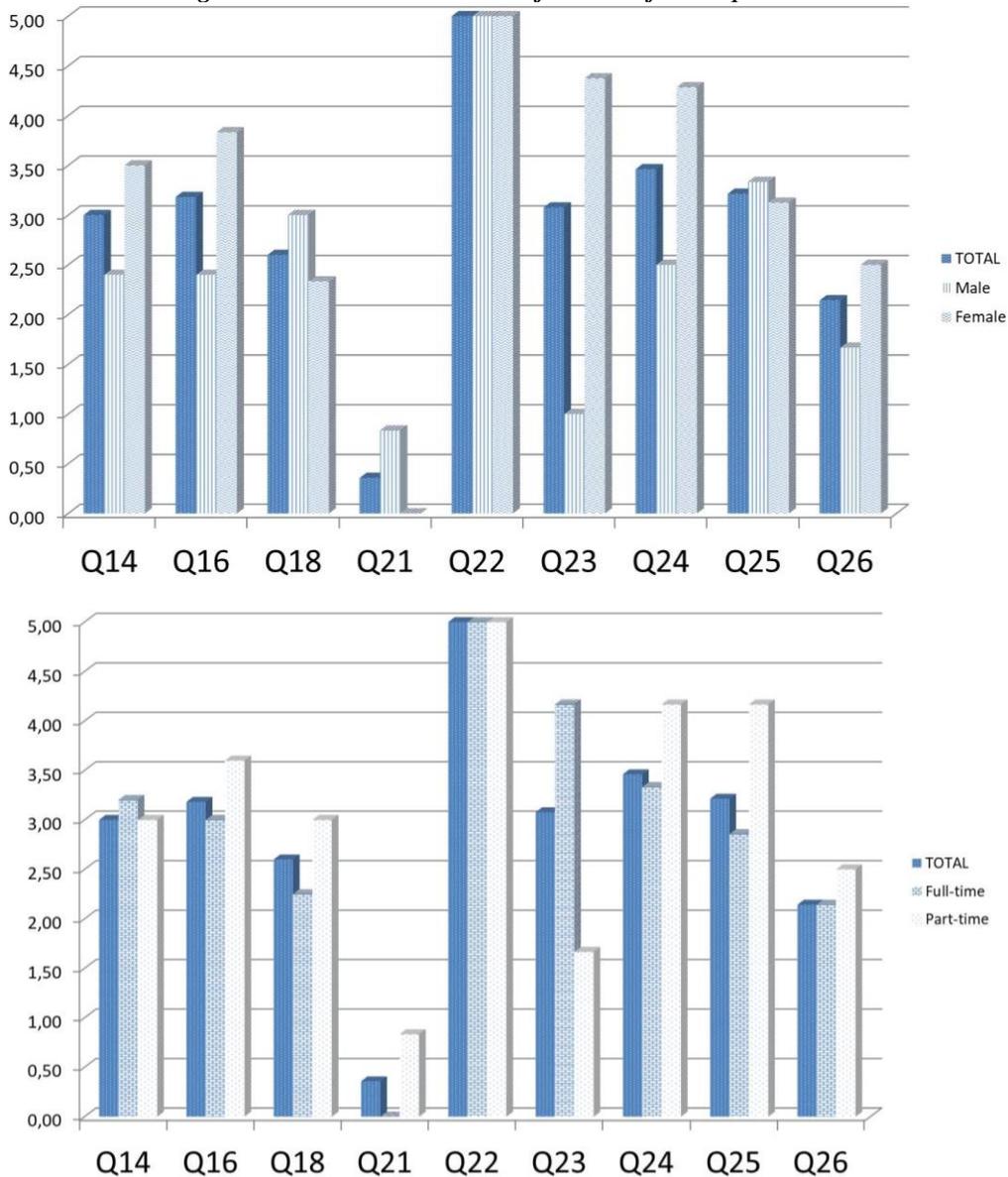
The analysis of the data revealed that the group, as a whole, did not feel fear, as the feeling of fear was more pronounced in women than in male respondents. The same goes for feelings of sadness and depression, loneliness. At the same time, we note that female respondents feel more often inspired during a state of emergency than male respondents. Respondents report that there is enough time to organize all the tasks (Q13), but in terms of learning and fun - time is not enough for male respondents (Q15). Part-time students and full-time students do not differ significantly in their confidence that there is enough time for fun and study, but full-time students are not so confident compared to part-time students that they will cope with all their tasks.

Although it has been noted that respondents tend to wear protective equipment (Q10), they are not sure that they will not become infected with COVID-19 (Q17), men are less confident. Half-time respondents are more confident than full-time respondents that they will not become infected with the coronavirus. It should be noted that the group followed the recommendations of the National Operational Headquarters (Q20), with female respondents being more executive (4.00).

Work-related behaviors before and after the pandemic are shown in Figure 3. Prior to the pandemic, female respondents agree more (3.83) that they have worked while studying (Q16) and have stopped working (Q14), but the

main reason is not the pandemic (Q26). Male respondents who worked (Q25) continue to work during the pandemic (Q18).

Fig. 3. Work-related behaviors before and after the pandemic



A small part of the group intended to participate in a work program in the United States (0.36) before the pandemic in the summer of 2020 (Q21), but respondents are adamant that the pandemic will prevent from going to the United States (Q24). Regarding future plans, the group is adamant and confident (5.00) that each respondent will work in the summer of 2020 (Q22), although the pandemic will create difficulties for this (Q23), reaching new consensus 4.29 among female respondents.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The current study reveals some of the social effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on students studying in the sector most affected by the pandemic, the Tourism sector. It is noteworthy that the pandemic is affecting young people who are reorganizing their lives and adapting to change.

The pandemic affected the lifestyle of the respondents – food diet, trying new foods, consuming more healthy food. Definitely, the current studies reveal that the female respondents believe that they eat healthier during a pandemic.

At the same time the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic impact is stronger on the part-time student respondents compared to the full-time student respondents.

The study reveals differences in the relationship between the two genders, but also confirms the general attitude on some of the issues. The current study is in line with Chang (2020) who emphasizes the more diligent attitude of women respondents to compliance. The current study reveals that although the respondents follow the recommendations of the National Operational Headquarters and pay great attention to their safety, respondents reply that they are not sure they would not be infected with the coronavirus.

Female respondents are more likely to be inspired during a state of emergency than male respondents.

At the same time, the respondents do not feel fear and intend to work in the summer of 2020 in the field of tourism, and in case of possible extension of the measures - the respondents believe that tourism will revive and are motivated to continue their education in tourism area.

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